



Meditations from the Heart of Yoga: Inner Smile

This simple yet profound meditation can ease emotional or physical tension.

By Shiva Rea

Based on Taoist Meditation practice, the inner smile meditation is a simple yet profound meditation that is quite natural to many people. It is centered on generating the benevolent qualities of a genuine smile that we usually offer to others. The inner smile is an opportunity to offer a smile to oneself. It can be done in a seated meditation session or in the midst of daily life. The inner smile can also be integrated into hatha yoga practice and can be particularly helpful during intense poses.

To begin, find a comfortable posture for meditation (seated on a cushion or blanket, in a chair, or against a wall). It may be helpful to set a timer for 10, 20, or 30 minutes so you can sink deeply into your meditation without wondering about the time. You may also want to gently ring a bell at the beginning and end of your meditation.

Place your hands on your knees in Jnana Mudra (index and thumb touching), with palms facing up to open your awareness or palms facing down to calm the mind. Do a body scan and relax any tension you may be holding. Let your spine rise from the root of the pelvis. Draw your chin slightly down and lengthen the back of your neck.

Meditation Practice

Begin by generating a feeling of natural happiness as if it emanates from the backs of the eyes. This may happen naturally or it may take you awhile to drop into the poetic possibility needed to allow a smile to come from the backs of your eyes. If the feeling does not come immediately, remind yourself of any experience of natural joy—for example, the face of a joyous child.

Once you generate the feeling of this smile, let it radiate down the backs of your eyes like a waterfall. Visualize this meditative stream flowing down the center of your spine, to your heart and lungs, then into your stomach and spleen (under your left lower ribs), and liver (under your right lower ribs). Let it run down through the kidneys (back ribs), the colon and intestines (belly), down into your genitals, and out into your legs and feet. You can repeat the sweep from the backs of the eyes to the feet or do one long, slow sweep. The inner smile can be its own complete meditation or it may lead you into an effortless meditative absorption.

When you are ready, bring your hands together in [Anjali Mudra \(Salutation Seal\)](#) and complete your meditation with a moment of gratitude, reflection, or prayer to seal the energy of your meditation into your life. Remember that you can cultivate the inner smile anytime throughout the day to fill the heart with compassion.

This article can be found online at http://www.yogajournal.com/meditation/747_1.cfm